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THE MUSLIM VOICE

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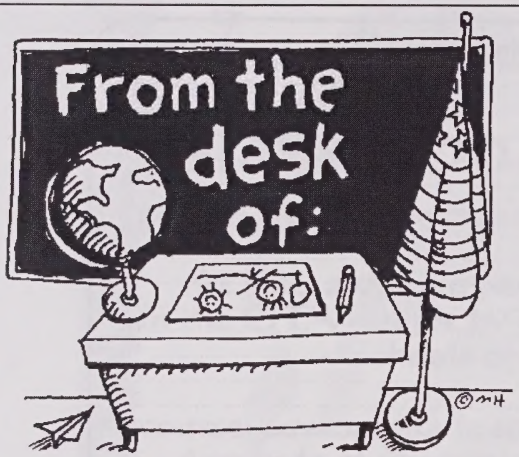


THE MUSLIM VOICE

Assalamu Alaykum,

Subhanallah, how fast the year has flown by! I can't believe that it is now April and I am writing up my last editorial of the year. In August, when I began work on the TMV, I had no idea what I was getting into. I didn't realize that I had a tool to spread truth about Islam and injustices, I didn't realize that I had been given a blessing from Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), and I didn't realize that this year would change me forever. It may seem as though I am being overly sentimental, however, my experience this year with the TMV and the MSA has taught me many things about the world, myself and Islam.

One of the most important things I learned is the power of the media. Our opinions can change based on whether we watch CNN or CBC. Thus, our involvement in media is absolutely necessary, whether we create and support our own forms, or we get involved in the existing media channels. It is crucial that we write, read, listen and respond. At the same time, we need to remember that often when Muslims are in the limelight, they do not only represent themselves but the entire community. Thus, it is our duty that we show the best of our religion and its people. Muslims around the world are feeling helpless, frustrated and angry. However, it is important to remember that Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) is full of Justice, Wisdom and Knowledge. He knows what is best for us, and the outcome of all conflicts. We must not lose hope and we must continue to pray for injustices around the world to end.

In addition to this, when I first joined MSA, I was a much different person then I am now. Although I followed the rituals of Islam such as prayer and fasting, I did not realize that as a Muslim, what an extraordinary gift I had been given a gift from Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). Through the TMV and MSA, I came across a group of people who were all working for the sake of this religion and Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). By watching the devotion and dedication of many individuals, I began to reflect on my own actions and goals. When one is born as a Muslim, it is easy to take religion for granted. Many of us simply follow the Islam that our parents have taught us: How to pray, when to fast, perhaps a few *hadiths*. However, when we are all striving towards *Jannat* (heaven), how can we possibly believe that this is enough to get us there? When we have a huge exam or interview, we prepare for nights, even weeks. Yet, how much do we really prepare for the ultimate test in comparison? It is impossible and unrealistic to spend your entire life praying or fasting when we have to also study and work. But we should try to incorporate Islam into our daily lives by following the example of the Prophet, working and studying for the sake of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) and by continuously purifying our intentions. Moreover, we should be proud of our Islamic identity.

When Islamic beliefs, values and rituals are being questioned all over the world, it can be difficult to retain the confidence and love that we should have for our religion. However, ultimately it is up to us, the youth in the West, to implement and preserve these values and beliefs in the environment that we live in. Whether it is by leaving class to pray, wearing *hijab*, saying *Asalamu alakum* to a stranger on the street, being sincere and humble, or simply by smiling at another, we should continuously aim to show the beauty of our *deen*. May Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) give us the strength to implement Islam lives into our lives.

Thus as the summer approaches, this is the perfect chance to catch up on all that you have been neglecting over the school year. Read more Quran, memorize some more *surahs*, write a letter to the editor, volunteer at an Islamic camp or local hospital for the sake of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). This is your chance to prepare for that final exam.

In closing, I would like to thank all the people that helped to make TMV such a success this year, alhumdulillah. From the artist of the beautiful covers, to the dedicated section editors, layout coordinators, to the online staff, TMV would have never been able to run without your help. May Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) reward you for your efforts.

Walaikum Asalam,
Noor Aliya Javed
Editor

On behalf of the TMV and MSA - We wish you the best of luck for your exams.
May Allah(*subhana wa ta'ala*) make it easy for you.
Ameen.

President's Message

Assalamu Alaykum,

As this academic year draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the MSA's humble roots, its recent growth, and a glimpse at its future direction.

During the late 1960's, Muslim students from around the world came to the University of Toronto, mostly to complete graduate degrees. Many were far removed from family and friends. In order to satisfy their social and religious needs in their new environment, they formed one of the first Muslim Students' Associations in Canada.

Initially, the MSA's role was simply to organize *Jumu'ah* prayers, Islamic study circles, and a few social activities. As the number of Muslim students increased over the years, a new generation arose to meet the evolving needs of the Muslim community.

Last year, a committee structure was established by the MSA at the University of Toronto, St. George Campus, which allowed Muslim students to participate in activities that suited their specific interests. This year, the structure was formalized and a set of procedures was developed that allowed the MSA to function in a bottom-up manner.

The main committees included *Da'wah* (Outreach), Community Affairs, Brothers and Sisters Events, Students for World Justice, Prayers, ProFac (Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, etc.), and of course, *The Muslim Voice*. Two Vice-Presidents supervised and assisted each committee's Coordinator, while I focused on administrative and policy matters with the General Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations Director.

The new structure allowed the MSA to multiply its number of activities and increase their quality, while not necessarily exhausting the same set of volunteers. Some noteworthy events and activities included a summer conference with ICNA and MAC, three *Da'wah* lectures; Islam Awareness Week; *Tajweed* and Islamic study circles; large-scale Palestine awareness events; Sisters-only formal dinner and talent show; lecture by former Taliban captive Yvonne Ridley; letter-writing campaigns to newspapers and the Canadian government; homelessness forum; tutoring for inner-city children; weekly sports and TGIJ's; CPR and first aid training; health forum for immigrant women; *Ramadan* food drive; numerous *Iftar* dinners; *Eid-ul-Adha* dinner with four other GTA campuses; and many other initiatives by our dedicated MSA volunteers.

Not only did the committee structure allow us to organize so many activities for our members, but it also enabled the MSA to focus on building a strong relationship with the University of Toronto administration. This year saw the introduction of *Halal* meat at three cafeterias and two residence dining halls, as well as the adoption of the MSA's recommendations on improving the orientation experience for Muslims. Currently, the administration is working with us to establish a large multi-faith centre and we are in discussions with the Provost to make academic accommodations for *Eid* more adequate.

By having over one thousand MSA members, in addition to hundreds of other Muslims on our campus, we have been able to bring people together from all cultures, backgrounds, and ideologies. Our membership consists of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We encourage Muslims to participate in all aspects of campus life; many have served in university governance and student council positions.

In cooperation with MSA-National, our Executive officers have attended many Executive Training Programs (ETP) that refreshed their professional skills and educated them on Islamic leadership values. Following such Islamic principles within a committee structure, along with the intention of working only for Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*, has enabled us to go beyond our own expectations in serving the Muslim community at the University of Toronto.

Next year will see an increase in the number of Muslims on campus, as Ontario universities admit a "double cohort" of students. In order to meet this challenge, we have tweaked the MSA's structure and introduced two new committees: Academic Affairs and Religious Accommodations. Furthermore, the importance of Students for World Justice was proven this year, and especially now, while our brothers and sisters in Iraq are suffering immeasurable atrocities as the United States leads its campaign of aggression. Hence, it will become a permanent committee next year with an elected coordinator.

As I conclude, I would like to thank all of our tireless volunteers and Executive members who made MSA activities possible. Of course, the MSA would be meaningless without you - the members who participated throughout the year and gave valuable feedback. I urge you to stay actively involved within the Muslim community - whether you are continuing your studies or graduating to enter the "real" world.

Muhammad Basil Ahmad, Hon.B.Sc.
President, Muslim Students' Association
University of Toronto, St. George Campus

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

ISLAM AWARENESS WEEK A SUCCESS!

By the grace of God, months of preparation and anticipation culminated in the eye-opening events of Islam Awareness Week from Feb. 3-7. The focus was on the topic of the Holy Qur'an and the week coincided with the date of *Hajj*.

"The turnout was better than we expected, and a lot of people commented on the importance of these initiatives," said Sumayyah Hussein, Outreach Coordinator for the events, "the main objective of the event was to create an atmosphere where people can discuss Islam openly and honestly."

Many Muslims and non-Muslims alike showed up for the informal workshops and final lecture on Friday. An open exhibit was also set up in the Stone Lobby of the Medical Sciences building, where Muslims students were available to chat with and answer any questions concerning Islam. There was also an international food sale, books for sale, and a video viewing.

Tuesday's workshop by Ahmad Kassas was delivered to a jam-packed audience and he emphasized the prophecies of various modern scientific discoveries contained in the Qur'an. A U of T Alumni and author of "Rethinking Muslilm Women and the Veil," Dr. Kathy Bullock conducted an open discussion about women and common misconceptions about them in the West. She also shared with us her story of conversion to Islam, to which she was "drawn like a magnet" from atheism. Thursday's workshop by Dr. Yaser Haddara on the topic of the Qur'an offered food for thought and was extended to accomodate all the questions from the audience. By request, the function ended with a recitation from the Holy Qur'an.

The highlight of the week came on Friday with a lecture in the Earth Sciences Auditorium by Dr. Jamal Badawi and Imam Malik, an activist from Bronx.

By the grace of God, the hard work and commitment of the brothers and sisters on the team was to be commended. The enthusiasm was catching and everyone had positive feedback to offer.

Nuzhat Khurshid

ANTI-WAR RALLY

It was freeeeezing on February 15 but despite the chilly weather, thousands of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths, joined together to protest the war on Iraq. This might sound absurd or inappropriate, but the rally was truly beautiful and a lot of freezing fun!

Active grandmothers came out with pictures of their grandchildren and signs that read, "Wars hurt children." Their sweet choir and silver hair was a show of tenderness, strength, and hope in what is often a cruel and dark world. Kids came out riding the backs of their guardians, one toddler wearing an adult sized T-shirt protesting the war. It left a smile on your lips, frozen of course. Adolescent girls stood on sidewalks cheerleading, trying to keep spirits high in the cold. One sister in a wheelchair with a sign that cried out something like "Wars lead to this," rode through the crowd with such vitality, she left the walking crowd behind her humbled and sharpened against the war.

In the crowd representing everything from women's groups to people fighting for animal rights, were students and teachers from Islamic Foundation School and a group from TARIQ mosque. Many Muslims stopped at the Toronto Masjid on Bond Street to offer *salaat al-Zuhr*, and to get warmed up. Although my close friend and I had the honour of signing a great wooden peace sign, I was sorry I didn't have a sign of my own, or a *nasheed*-like chant. Next time, *insha'Allah*! One of my close friends did bring her duff though and had a blast beating it throughout the rally.

As the rally came to an end, people were dancing in circles and doing jumping jacks. Reluctant to go home but literally frozen, the rainbow crowd of humanity slowly trickled away.

SISTERS' TALENT NITE 2003: *AN EVENING OF ELEGANCE*

For the first time in MSA history, Sisters' Talent Nite was transformed into a GTA-wide celebration of sisterhood.

Sisters from across the GTA from a diverse array of backgrounds and cultures came together for 'An Evening of Elegance' at Candles Banquet Hall on February 16, 2003. Mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers and granddaughters enjoyed a delicious meal with entertainment, cultural songs, dances, and a multicultural fashion show of unprecedented diversity.

The fashion show brought together sisters from over 12 different countries around the globe. Guests had the opportunity to see the lovely styles and colours of garments worn by their sisters from countries including: Afghanistan, India, Egypt, Lebanon, Mauratia, Morroco, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria. The final group to walk down the runway was 'The *Muslimah*' which featured a member of each culture wearing the Islamic garments of her country, carrying adjectives on placards that truly described the qualities and liberty that Muslim women

are blessed with. Which other faith allows such a complete integration with such diverse beauty to come together and celebrate our unity as a single cohesive under a single omniscient Creator? This was the

message the sisters of each campus who worked to organize this event had at heart when they set out on this mission. And *Alhamdulillah*, with Allah's help their efforts were a resounding success.

Sisters commented that this was quite possibly the most fun-filled event they had ever attended, where they felt so much joy and good-will shared between sisters they had never even met before.

An immense *Jazak Allah Khair* is owed to all the sisters who participated in and made the event as exceptional as it was. It would never have been possible without the love, team-work, and dedication of sisters who patiently devoted their time to each detail of planning and orchestrating this event. It has been an honour to have worked with each of them.

May Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* reward everyone for their efforts and help us to continue, *insha'Allah*, to build an *ummah* that is as strong and united as we proved it could be.

Fatima Butt, Sisters' Events Coordinator 2002-2003

SKI TRIP

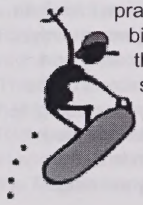
Wow! It's been over a month and I'm still aching. I've been asked to write about MSA's 3rd Annual Ski Trip, and to be perfectly honest I can't remember a thing. Perhaps it's because of all those times I fell head first. In fact, that also explains my recent lapse in my exam…well actually that problem was there long before the Ski Trip.

Oh wait its coming back to me, we went on Tuesday February 18th. I had to wake up horribly early that day. It was snowing. Right, I got it now.

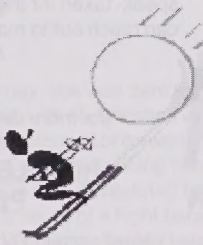
The ski trip was a more of a GTA MSA event, with at least three campuses participating: U of T St. George, UTM and York. York and UT St. George went together, we left quite late but got to Mt. St. Louis at the same time as UTM. I think our crew hit the slopes at about 11ish. Training started and then the skiing/rolling.

I, as 12 other people on our bus, decided to go for snowboarding rather than skiing. BIG MISTAKE! That thing is next to impossible to steer….stopping is the easiest part though, painful but easy. The snowboarding trainer was just too good to be true. This is what he did, took us up a really tiny hill and told us to go down. Then he sends us up the mountain! Up on top and no way down but by boarding, let me tell you snow is not that tasty. I literally rolled down that mountain.

Well lucky for me *Dhuhr* prayers interrupted, we prayed at the lodge and I had a quick bite. Then pulled myself together and then went back again to truly "hit" the slopes. But this time, I actually did better, I boarded down about 30% of the mountain….ok I'm stretching it, it was more like 10%, but it was better than before.



Oh by the way, the 12 other people who went snowboarding, by afternoon that number had dropped, smart people.



At 4:30pm we went back to the lodge returned our equipment, prayed *Asr* and started our 2-hour journey home. I was the only bruised one, and was definitely wetter than everyone else, *Alhumdulillah*. We got downtown just in time to pray *Maghreb*, after which everyone went their own way.

Based on my assessment (that's engineer talk for I have "no idea") everyone had quite a bit of fun, my only complaint was lack of people from our campus. UTM had 2 buses full, actually some of our people sold us out and went with UTM, but that's all good, at least they went. Now I can't wait for next year's trip, I doubt I'll be wiser, but I will definitely not go snowboarding.

YVONNE RIDLEY LECTURE

The Ridley lecture had so much substance to it that a full treatment could only do it justice. However, at present, I would like to focus on just one aspect which I found particularly enlightening. Yvonne Ridley herself was a well-spoken, gentle, yet humorous lecturer. After her thought provoking presentation about her "stay" in Afghanistan, she was asked some very important questions. Amidst all the rumors about her considering converting to Islam, a question was asked about the thing that attracted her to Islam the most. In what seemed to be a rather blunt question, she gave such an eloquent reply which left me, to tell you the truth, quite elated for the rest of the week.

She said that the most appealing and/or positive aspect of Islam she had experienced thus far was the sisterhood. In short, she really was taken back by the "feminine element" in the religion. She commented that it was the sisters who were so warm and loving and who, with dignity and fair-mindedness, carried the banner of Islam so highly on their shoulders. This appealed to Ridley for what she saw in these women was a bond which they were more than willing to share. Perhaps why this caught my attention most is because often our complementary counterparts go unnoticed. And here we had a woman who, after having caught the eye of the public because of her captivity in Afghanistan, was now considering becoming Muslim. And it was the women of our blessed religion who had caught HER eye more than anything else. Implicitly, what this meant is that the sisters of Islam caught the eye of the world. In the final analysis, it can be said that our religion is most effective when its forces of complementary-opposites- the yin and yang so to

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

speak- taken for their merit on their own terms, can reach out to mankind.

Mohammed Rustom, 4th Year
Philosophy and Arabic

(for more details on this lecture, see pg. 7)

HOMELESSNESS: A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Here's a mind boggling fact: one million in Canada are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Here's another: in Toronto alone more than a hundred and fifty thousand people are on the waiting list for social housing. Shocking? Perhaps not. Homelessness is an issue I think we all recognize but often choose to ignore. If you wish to merely dismiss the 'bums' on the street, here's another fact: the noticeable homeless you see on the street represent 20% of the homeless population. Another 80%, the 'hidden homeless,' live in shelters or bounce around from relative to relative, one temporary accommodation to another. It feels unjust to classify such a situation 'unappealing.'

We as Muslims are responsible for bettering our society. It was in this vein that the Community Affairs committee of the Muslim Students' Association held an evening conference on homelessness on Tuesday March 11, 2003 to learn more about the problem and ways that it can be rectified. Three speakers gave presentations at the event.

The first, Mr. Beric German, is a housing advocate who currently works at Street Health in downtown Toronto and is a founding member of the steering committee, a part of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. Mr. German spoke generally about homelessness, including the plight of the homeless, the squalid conditions of shelters, the multiracial demographic of the homeless, and poverty as the underlying factor in rendering one homeless.

Following this, the audience heard from Dr. Walid Saleh, currently an Assistant Professor affiliated with the Center for the Study of Religion at University of Toronto. Giving an Islamic perspective on homelessness and social justice, Dr. Saleh spoke of the methods taken in the time of the Prophet *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* to combat homelessness.

Finally, Mr. Michael Shapcott, a research associate at the University of Toronto's Center for Urban and Community Studies and an expert on housing and solutions to homelessness, gave a presentation regarding ways to rectify the problem. He covered three main areas. First, he presented the One Percent Solution endorsed by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee and many other groups. Secondly, he outlined the major groups that are active with regards to housing and homelessness, and the actions that they are taking. Finally, he spoke of specific actions that individuals and groups can take to help end homelessness. He provided a range of actions, from traditional yet effective lobby techniques such as letter writing to MP's, to volunteering with local groups that are involved with such actions as rallies and other events.

The event ended on a note to take action, which MSA Community Affairs certainly hopes to do in the future. Safiyyah Ally, the committee coordinator, gave a short presentation at the end of the program about the committee's work. I will take the liberty to repeat the essential message of her address, urging all of you to support such activities in the following years. Our knowledge of what is right or wrong is worthless if we do not care about promoting it. The principles of justice that our religion endorses are trivial if we do not make a concerted effort to ensure that these principles are carried out.

Attending the event, I was surprised at the low number of Muslim attendees is the audience; in fact, it seemed that non-Muslims outnumbered the Muslims in the audience, which I thought was a shame, for it showed that the former cares more about such issues than the latter. I don't believe that this is right; I am certain that there are more in the Muslim community than was represented by the handful of Muslims present at the event. I hope we can find the strength and conviction to shake ourselves out of a state of apathy, to care for others who may not have it as good as we do, and to strive, as Islam implores us, to make this world a

GTA MSA EID DINNER

Dim lights with the sound of *Labaik Allahuma Labaik* echoing through the hall was how the GTA MSA dinner started off. Taj banquet hall was the venue for this years GTA MSA dinner hosted by the council of the 5 MSA's in the greater Toronto area on March 8th. The dinner brought together Muslim students from Ryerson York and the three University of Toronto campuses together for an evening of *nasheeds*, and a motivating speech by Brother Abdul Malik. The beautiful voices of brothers from Ryerson and UTM enchanted the audience as they sang *nasheeds* in remembrance of the Him and his beloved. Brother Abdul Malik spoke to the audience about the situation of Muslims in North America at present and with impending war, his *naseeha* was for the brothers and sisters to come together; reaffirm their faith and *tawakkul* (trust) in Allah. This evening was mainly to bring the 5 campuses together and show unity and strength among them, said one of the organizers of the dinner. Tickets for the dinner seemed to sell out quickly, a larger venue for next years dinner seems warranted due to the lack of space... that didn't seem to bother most of the audience who seemed to enjoy evening.

"In the Hands of the Taliban"

Released Taliban prisoner speaks out in Toronto

On the cold, snowy evening of Saturday, February 22nd, the well-known British journalist Yvonne Ridley captivated the attention of over 450 people at the University of Toronto's Medical Sciences Auditorium. Invited to speak in Toronto by the local Muslim Students' Association, she discussed her 10-day experience in Taliban captivity, the current situation in Afghanistan, her growing interest in Islam, and Bush's "War on Terror."

Not buying into the barrage of propaganda from Washington, and being refused a visa to enter Afghanistan on three separate occasions, Ridley finally decided to slip into Afghanistan beneath a traditional Afghan woman's *burqa*.

She wanted to find out for herself "the views of ordinary Afghan people, what they thought of September 11th, their hopes and fears of what they expected from the American bombing, and to find out what life was like under the Taliban." Surprisingly, Yvonne Ridley said she felt no animosity or hostility against her, even though she was British and her country was poised to attack Afghanistan with the U.S. Nevertheless, she did feel a little nervous and did not want to overstay her welcome.

Heading back to Pakistan, her guides informed her that the border had been shut down due to the great number of refugees pouring out of Afghanistan. Ridley's entourage followed a smuggling route instead to get out of the country. With her feet blistered and bleeding, Yvonne Ridley agreed to ride a donkey for final twenty minutes of her journey.

Unfortunately, the donkey "had a mind of its own." As soon as she got on, it bolted. She tried to grab its reins, but her camera swung into the full view of a passing Taliban soldier. She was ordered to get off the donkey and her guides were rounded up. Feeling that she could not abandon her guides, Yvonne Ridley removed her *burqa* to the surprise of the curious crowd that had gathered. The Taliban soldier arrested Ridley and her guides, and drove off with them. Ridley immediately knew that she was in some serious trouble. Feeling uneasy, the Taliban stopped the car and ordered her to get out. Standing on a rocky platform, another angry and curious crowd began to gather around.

Ridley thought that she was about to be stoned to death and all sorts of horrible thoughts raced through her mind. However, a woman in a *burqa* soon approached and frisked her to search for weapons. Ridley later learned that the Taliban "had far too much respect to start frisking a woman" themselves.

Ordered back into the car, Ridley was taken to Jalalabad, home of the Taliban's intelligence headquarters. She was given a very nice room by local standards. Overlooking a garden with a stream, it had an Afghan rug, floor pillows, and access to a flushable toilet. She was also given some toothpaste and soap, the boxes of which she later used to keep a secret diary of her ordeal.

However, the Taliban refused her request to make a telephone call. "If you don't let me use the telephone... my mother will think I'm hanging upside down off this roof, stark naked, while you're whipping me," Ridley threatened. To her surprise, they looked shocked. At this point, she realised the Taliban "had no idea how they had been demonised by the West... and they were very hurt," but they still refused her request.

A Muslim "cleric" visited her on the sixth day. He was "a very tall man in an immaculate ivory gown and turban" and had "an amazingly shiny face." Ridley later learned that the apparent glow on his face was called *noor*. He "glided" in with a smile on his face and asked what her religion was and what she thought about Islam. She said that she was a Protestant Christian and that Islam was "a wonderful religion... your people pray five times a day!"

Ridley then faced a dilemma when she was asked if she would like to become Muslim. She replied that she could not possibly make such a life-changing decision while in prison, and promised to study Islam and the Qur'an as soon as she got back to London, if they let her go. The "cleric" simply smiled and left the room. Ten minutes later, she was told that she was going.However, to her dismay, she was sent to Kabul and locked up with six Christian women who had been accused of converting Muslims to Christianity while doing humanitarian work. She was devastated to end up in prison, instead of a flight back home.

Suddenly, the war began. Sitting on her new bed, Ridley could hear loud anti-aircraft fire above her head, while cruise missiles screamed down within close vicinity. She thought that the Taliban would renege on their promise and keep her as a hostage or human shield.

Huge explosions close to the prison drowned her thoughts out. This was very terrifying for her: "I can negotiate with the Taliban, but I can't negotiate with a cruise missile. How does any missile know that I'm British, that I'm a civilian, that I'm innocent? It was at that point that I realised the futility of war." The next morning she expected the worst, but Yvonne Ridley was actually going home. She could not believe it: the Taliban were keeping their promise, even after the U.S. had "bombed the hell out of them." Mullah Umar, the Taliban leader, himself signed her release papers on "humanitarian grounds."

As soon as she stepped back into Pakistan, a reporter asked her, "How did the Taliban treat you?" Her response was simple: "With courtesy and respect." According to Ridley, headline writers were furious: "Everybody in the West wanted a victim. They wanted me to come out with tales of abuse and horror. Although I didn't enjoy my captivity, I have to say that I was treated with courtesy and respect."

After flying back home, Yvonne Ridley contacted some Muslim leaders in London because the Taliban did keep their word in the end. "Despite being bombed... against all the odds, they still released me. I feel as though I should keep my word now," Ridley said. She got a copy of the Qur'an and began reading. What started out as an "academic exercise" soon became a personal, "spiritual journey." "I was amazed. It makes it quite clear that women are equal in spirituality and worth

(continued to page 28...)

A Question of Morals

When referring to others, if someone has ninety-nine bad characteristics (habits, etc) in him/her & only one good characteristic, focus on that good point. When referring to yourself, if you have ninety-nine good characteristics & only one bad characteristic, always focus on trying to correct that bad point!!

That's the way I try to live my life. It is very easy to criticize others and find faults in them, but it is hard to accept the faults in us and to focus on good attributes of others. A person might be great in one aspect (e.g. studies, sports, etc) but overall he might be a loser. On the other hand, someone you might think (and not know for sure) to be bad could be among the best!

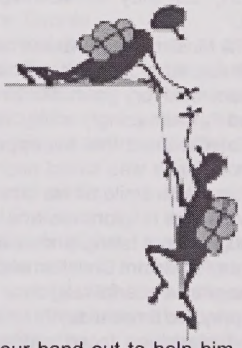
"O ye who believe! Let not some men among you ridicule at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women ridicule at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor shall you mock one another, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Evil indeed is the name of wickedness after attaining faith. Anyone who does not repent after this, these are the evil-doers"

[Quran, 49:11]

Everyone has some good in him/her, but it depends first, on the person himself to improve him/herself, and secondly, on us to help and bring out the best in that person. If we reject and avoid such people at all times even though that person is trying his/her best, all would be lost! In today's generation, problems arise because people who were social outcasts in society took up the wrong path or ended up doing something really stupid to get attention. However, In certain cases, I should say that the masses are not the only ones to blame.

A person needs to believe in himself/herself and their own abilities. If you doubt yourself, others will doubt you more. Respecting oneself, and believing that Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* is always watching, is ever present, and always there for you, no matter how much the people oppose you, is essential. Many great men of the past had brought the true message to their people. Save a few, all opposed them, but this did not make these great messengers loose faith in Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* or sway away from the truth. And today, for the same message, that was rejected in the past, that people who seek the truth, strive for.

Everyone has a certain responsibility over a few others, but the maximum extent of such responsibilities is to help those people as much as you can, support them, guide them to the right path and try to show them the difference between right and wrong. Other than this, one cannot be entirely responsible for the actions of others. If a person is hanging from a cliff, all you can do is



give your hand out to help him, but it still depends on that person to take your hand! I should still remind you, and myself first, that it is nevertheless your responsibility as a Muslim to stretch out your hand to help.

On the authority of Abu Huraira *(radi'Allahu 'anhu)* that the Prophet *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* said:

"Whosoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the grief's of the Day of Judgment. Whosoever alleviates [the lot of] a needy person, Allah will alleviate [his lot] in this world and the next. Whosoever shields a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this world and the next. Allah will aid a servant [of HIS] so long as the servant aids his brother. Whosoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among them, without tranquility descending upon them, mercy enveloping them, the angels surrounding them, and Allah making mention of them amongst those who are with Him. Whosoever is slowed down by his actions will not be hastened forward by his lineage."

[Reported by Muslim]

We, as university students, are at a juncture where we're learning to stand on our feet. Never should we forget the words of wisdom that our religion & parents teach us.

THINK...what would be better; to do something just to be in the "In Crowd", something that our ethics and teachings would not approve of? Is it right to go against the wishes of our parents, who did so much for us, including paying our tuitions with their hard earned money, so that we could have a better life and education and not face the hardships that they might have gone through in life. Or, is it better to do the right thing, to be in the "Right Crowd", and make Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* and our parents proud of us, as great doctors,

Question: What is haraam, but when swallowed is loved by Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)?
Answer: PRIDE!

researchers, and engineers or simply a good person. THE CHOICE IS YOURS. Before you make up your mind about someone or something, know the facts. "Things are not always what they seem".

Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) reported: The Messenger of Allah *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*, the most truthful, the most trusted, told us:

"... By Allah -other than Whom there is no Allah - verily one of you may perform the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is but an arm's length between him and it, when that which has been written for him overtakes him so that he performs the deeds of the people of the Hell Fire and thus enters it; one of you may perform the deeds of the people of the Hell Fire, till there is but an arm's length between him and it, when that which has been written for him overtakes him so that he performs the deeds of the people of Paradise and enters therein."

[Reported by Bukhari and Muslim]

The thought I leave you with is: Always believe in yourself no matter the odds, have no doubt in those actions permissible according to the Quran & *Sunnah* and never loose faith in Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. HE WAS, HE IS, AND HE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU!

"And HE provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish HIS purpose: verily for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion"

[Quran, 65:3]

Also, never give up hope or stop helping and communicating with your fellow Muslims, be it as little as saying *Salam*. How hard is to give away a smile? I'm sure we all have plenty to pass around!

(*JazakAllahu Khairun* to Dr. Suhail Asrar & Faraz Siddiqui for all their help, also to Mohamad Alameddine for all his invaluable advice).

Farhan Muhammad Asrar, University of Toronto (St.George), MSc., Faculty of Medicine

Peace and Understanding in Islam

Islam is based on principles of peace, compassion and understanding. It is undoubtedly disconcerting that Islam is not being personified in this way, nowadays. We often hear Muslims blaming the media for misrepresenting the faith; however, is the issue one that the media has created or have we perhaps a part in it?

If we faithfully believe in what the Qur'an and Sunnah teach about love and tolerance, and we strive to emulate and embody these ideals, then we would certainly give justice to Islam's Truth – we would be acting as Muslims. By this, it is meant that we would accept others and seek to assist not just our own people, but humanity at large. Certainly, we should take action to aid our Muslim brothers and sisters, but we must not ignore the rest of our world. The reputation of Islam and the chance for global peace would be bettered if we extended our help to others.

We must, therefore, take responsibility by acting in accordance with Islamic notions of peace and understanding so that we do not give the media, or anyone, an opportunity to obscure and subdue the message of Islam.

It is our duty to promote peace and understanding so that Islam is seen for what it rea lly stands for.

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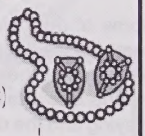

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A Matter of PRIDE

A group of ladies walk into a mosque. They are all beautiful physical examples of Muslim women. They are fully covered, some even in face veils with gloves with *Jilbabs*, *Khymars* and even *abiyas* over. They are the perfect picture of Islam. They make beautiful *salat*, and even more beautiful recitation. As they are about to leave, one of them looks to a sister who is praying in the *masjid* and thinks, "So and so should not call herself Muslim, for she does not even wear hijab, except when she comes to *masjid*."

This woman has harmed herself. Islam is certainly the physical - outward appearance. It is a very valid and significant part of the *deen*, but it is also the heart and the behavior and the soul. This woman may not have backbitten the woman who was not a *muhajibah*, because she did not actually say anything, but she has done something much more dangerous, much worse. Arrogance and pride have affected her. She has allowed the practices that she does, for Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) sake, to make her feel she is superior or even safe. No one has a guarantee. We do our best to please Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), but we all have to rely on Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) Mercy. Also, we can not judge who is going to be saved from the fire. We do not know what Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) will do, so to look down on one who does not practice as we do is arrogance, and we must avoid it.

Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: The Apostle of Allah (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) observed: He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise. A person (amongst his hearers) said: Verily a person loves that his dress should be fine, and his shoes should be fine. He (the Prophet) remarked: Verily, Allah (subhana wa ta'ala) is Graceful and He loves Grace. Pride disdains the truth (out of self-conceit) and contempt for the people.

(Sahih Muslim: Book 1, Number 0164)

Some of our beloved Prophet's (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) companions used to fear so much that they were not doing enough that they would sometimes faint from fear of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), while they were spending the nights praying and the days fasting and devoting their lives to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*),. Who are we to think we have a guarantee?

In the previous hadith, the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) is clearly warning us that we have no right to look down on one another. No matter what. Even if the person is a sinner, we have no right. Look to the example of the adulterous man being punished. The man had confessed and been stoned to death.

"...Then the Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) heard one of his companions saying to another: Look at this man whose fault was concealed by Allah (subhana wa ta'ala) but who would not leave the matter alone, so that he was stoned like a dog. He said nothing to them but walked on for a time till he came to the corpse of an ass with its legs in the air. He asked: Where are so and so? They said: Here we are, Apostle of Allah (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)! He said: Go down and eat some of this ass's corpse. They replied: Apostle of Allah! Who can eat any of this? He said: The dishonor you have just shown to your brother is more serious than eating some of it. By Him in whose hand my soul is, he is now among the rivers of Paradise and plunging into them.

(Sunan Abu Dawud: Book 38, Number 4414)

Look to this example. The man had committed a major sin. He had confessed to the sin. Yet, his repentance for that sin was sincere. We must not judge others because they sin, for that is for Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* Only. We can give out the punishments that Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* has mandated, and then leave it to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* to forgive them or not. We can not decide. We are not privy to what is in the heart. We can talk to the one who is not doing something Islam mandates, like hijab or beard or avoiding music or whatever, but we can not even try to believe that we are better than they are. For we do not know their circumstances or what is in their hearts or even their fates. That is for Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)*.

Look to the example of the prostitute. If we had seen her in the street, what would we have thought of her? Yet she was granted Paradise for a small deed she did.

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "A prostitute was forgiven by Allah (subhana wa ta'ala), because, passing by a panting dog near a well and seeing that the dog was about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe, and tying it with her head-cover she drew out some water for it. So, Allah (subhana wa ta'ala) forgave her because of that."

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 4, Book 54, Number 538)

We can not be happy with her sins, but we must teach her, maybe punish her, but we should not abuse her, nor should we be certain that we are so much better than her. Furthermore, we should take the time to befriend those who we see committing sins, if we can. The person may simply be ignorant of the correct Islamic practices. We should try to teach them and maybe gain something ourselves from this effort. It may

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed: None shall enter the Fire (of Hell) who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of Iman and none shall enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride.

-Related by Muslim

be that this person has something to offer you in the way of goodness.

When we are harsh with one another, when we look down on one another, we may be pushing the weaker of us to commit more sin. Think about it. Would you accept advice from one that looks down on you or insults you? Of course not. We must respect and like someone to take advice from him or her. No matter how bad the actions of the Muslim seem to us, we must never think we are so much better that we have the right to insult or even look down upon anyone. Look to the example of our merciful Prophet *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*:

Narrated Anas bin Malik: A Bedouin came and passed urine in one corner of the mosque. The people shouted at him but the Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) stopped them till he finished urinating. The Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) ordered them to spill a bucket of water over that place and they did so.
(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 1, Book 4, Number 221)

The Muslims shouted at him, they were abusive, but the Prophet *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* in his great mercy and wisdom, knew that this is not the way to teach. My old teacher, Ghassan Al Baraqawi, once told me, "Teach, do not preach for the people like explanation, not confrontation." These are wise words. We need to think about what we think and say so that we can actually help each other, not tear each other down. There is none amongst us who can claim to be perfect. There is none amongst us who can guarantee that he/she will enter *Jannah* with no trial or punishment. We must not try to usurp the role of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* by passing judgment on one another.

Pride and arrogance are the tools of Shaytan. When he was told to prostrate to Adam, and he refused, it became his undoing. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* says:

And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith.
[Quran, 2:34]

Also, if you see this in you, beware of trying to justify yourself. Look to the example of Shaytan and his justifications when Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* questioned him about his refusal to prostrate:

He (Allah) said: What hindered you so that you did not prostrate when I commanded you? He said: I am better than he: You have created me of fire, while him You create of dust. He said: Then get forth from this (state), for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein. Go forth, therefore, surely you are of those degraded.
[Quran, 7:12-13]

We can not allow ourselves to fall into this horrible trap from Shaytan. We can not allow ourselves to think we are better, for the sin of pride is great. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)* says,

And when it is said to him, guard against (the punishment of) Allah; pride carries him off to sin, therefore hell is sufficient for him; and certainly it is an evil resting place.
[Quran, 2:206]

So, brothers and sisters: Next time you see someone who is doing wrong, either in appearance or action, think twice before you think you are better. Go to the person, if you can, with friendship and gentleness. Advise. Do not assume the worst. Give him or her seventy excuses for the sin, and try to help him/her to understand the evil involved. Do not expect a change. Just advise. Leave any changes to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)*. The person may get angry or try to dispute with you. Do not fall to this trick of Shaytan. Just leave him/her with the evidences from Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala)* book and the authentic sunnah, and let it be. It is for them to accept or reject, and your job will be done. But do not leave them thinking yourself superior.

Also, next time you see someone from another culture or background, do not judge them based on your preconceived notions about that group. See the individual. Talk to him/her. It may be that they will have some advice that will benefit you. It may be that while you may dress more Islamicly, they have better Islamic manners than you do. Do not assume that because you look more like a Muslim that you are the better Muslim. This pride and haughtiness you feel, may be your undoing. Fear Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)*, brothers and sisters. Fear Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)*, and give each Muslim his due. As I have said many times before, the most evil and wretched amongst us is better than the best of the non-Muslims, and it is our job to advise each other to bring each other up from the darkness and filth of sin to the light and cleanliness of obeying Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala)*.

Ya Allah make us love one another. Ya Allah, make us help one another. Ya Allah prevent us from hurting one another. Ya Allah make us truly brothers and sisters. Make us one body, one heart. Ameen

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HUMAN SHIELDS IN IRAQ

Talking to Rodney Dinner, a volunteer for Human Shields In Iraq

The war in Iraq officially began in the early morning of March 20, 2003. However, it is obvious that the world did not behave passively prior to its commencement as was evident with the division at the United Nations and the worldwide anti-war protests. One of the anti-war movements that gained force in the months leading up to the war was the Human Shields mission in Iraq. Human Shields is a group composed of volunteers from various parts of the world who planned to place themselves in areas pertinent to Iraqi civilian life in order to attempt to deter any military attack.

Rodney Dinner, an OISE student at the University of Toronto, volunteered for Human Shields during the month of February. An American citizen who completed his undergraduate studies in the United States, Dinner first heard about Human Shields while reading a newspaper on the TTC. He says that he initially thought the group was "crazy" but that this soon gave way to feelings of wonder and amazement. Within a week, Dinner decided to join the movement and departed for Istanbul, where the group was traveling through, on its way to Baghdad (the group originally left London on January 25).

During his time in Baghdad, Dinner organized many demonstrations and acted as a facilitator for the group. He scouted potential sites such as schools, hospitals, human treatment plants and bridges where the group would be able to function as human shields. In addition, he was able to interact with the locals and gain a sense of their suffering and feelings of resentment toward the west. Since coming back from Iraq, Dinner has given many interviews with Canadian and American media, these sometimes numbering up to five a day.

Dinner says that during his time as a human shield, he discovered the sense of fear, bitterness and resentment of many Iraqi's toward the west, especially in light of the war talk that was escalating at the time. The effects of the twelve year sanctions were also made obvious to Dinner, as he says that the multiple statistics regarding Iraqi children "don't mean anything until you see it." For example, Dinner was able to spend time with children who did not look more than eight or nine years old, but actually turned out to be in their mid-teens. The condition of stunted growth due to malnutrition currently affects over one million Iraqi children, and it is estimated that an additional one million will be put in this position as a result of the current war. Dinner also mentions problems related to depleted uranium that arose after the first Gulf War, like the 500% increase in the rate of leukemia. Although the conditions arising from depleted uranium occurred primarily in the South, effects can be seen anywhere in Iraq.

Dinner had been socially active in organizations such as the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine, before he went to Iraq. When asked about the stereotypes of Muslims that are prevalent in the mainstream media, he said that Muslims were "one of the most demonized communities in the Western world - you don't need to go to Iraq to discover that." However, one thing his trip to Iraq did do was put him in a position where he would receive criticism from his fellow Americans that his actions were unpatriotic. Before he left for Iraq, he had a response ready: "Our leaders are about to kill thousands of people in our name and supposedly in our interests. For those of us that disagree with such an action, to voice our dissent is not 'siding with the enemy', it is the basic practice of democracy."

There have also been criticisms that Human Shields were simply used as propaganda by Saddam Hussein. However, Dinner says that this is simply not true as most of these claims are based on the incorrect information that the Iraqi government dictated everything. He says that during his time in Iraq, Human Shields probably had more freedom than any other group as the rules regarding taking pictures and abiding by a curfew didn't apply to them.

The demographics of human shields was diverse as the age range was anywhere between 24 and 68. The group was largely composed of Europeans (most of them British), but also included North Americans and some individuals from Arab countries. Dinner was one of a few Jewish individuals that were a part of the group. Organized by a former US Marine and Gulf War veteran, Ken O'Keefe, Human Shields had about 150 volunteers when Dinner joined. The diversity and determination of the group garnered much worldwide attention, and as Dinner puts it, was "just one of many forms of protest that needs to happen to intervene in a circle of violence…driven much more by the economic interests of a few than by a safe non-violent vision of the world."

Despite this determination, there were many risks that Dinner took by being involved in Human Shields. He mentions that there was a general fear of the "unknown" and of stepping into a war zone, yet that this took "a certain amount of privilege, which is not easy to understand." Another risk was that it is illegal for American citizens to visit Iraq without the permission

The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy

Quran, 49:10

of the U.S. government. Despite the fact that the maximum penalty is twelve years in prison or a one million dollar fine, Dinner was not deterred because "such laws are ways of scaring people out of expressing disagreement with the powers that be…I am not going to live my life in fear of my own government imprisoning me for expressing disagreement with violence."

This is not a perspective that was shared by many, including his family and friends. But despite their initial reactions of anger and concern that he was suffering from a lapse of judgment, almost all of them became supportive. Dinner's professors were also supportive and he was able to come back in time to finish his school year. Currently, Dinner is teaching as part of his curriculum at OISE as well as doing presswork for Human Shields. Prior to the outbreak of war, his press work included writing letters to many celebrities who had spoken out against the war (such as Madonna, Nelson Mandela, Richard Gere and Jimmy Carter) and urge them to visit to Iraq.

With the outbreak of war, it is evident that the United States government has turned a blind eye to the worldwide opposition and outcry. Dinner says that it is obvious that this was a pre-determined war with a very set economic agenda, and that no evidence was provided that a danger was posed by Saddam Hussein. In order to de-legitimize the anti-war movement, Dinner points out that the movement is either ignored or made to sound unpatriotic and insane. George W. Bush himself claims that he is demonstrating leadership by not giving into "smaller" groups, while in actuality he omits facts and relies heavily on insinuations.

"Bush hides mass violence through terms like 'regime shift' and 'topple Saddam'. One could easily forget that in the last Gulf War over 100,000 Iraqi people died. The UN estimates over a million Iraqi refuges and many dead as a result of this war.

"Chief UN inspector Blix himself has said he sees no justification for war. Yet it is quite clear that the United States has 20,000 nuclear warheads, and has the unique distinction of being the only nation to use nuclear weapons against another. The US has far and away more weapons of mass destruction than most nations combined, and has used them in numerous coups, massacres and invasions around the world."

Although Human Shields did not prevent the war from commencing, it is evident that it was one aspect of the growing worldwide anti-war movement that garnered well-deserved attention. While Dinner encourages other University students to get involved in groups like Human Shields, he says that even minimal participation is important. For example, he arrived in Baghdad on the day of the International Peace Protests (February 15) and says that this gave incredible hope to the people of Iraq. It matters to plan and take part in protests because it is "hard to grasp the profound effects of minimal participation."

*Note: The name Rodney Dinner is an alias that is used to protect the safety of the participant.

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Letters from the Children

The following were written by Sr. Arshia Alam's grade 5 class at the Islamic Foundation of Toronto. These letters, poems, and prayers were sent to the United Nations to reflect the views our children, whose voices are often unheard.

Dear United Nations,
I want to know why the United States might have a war with Iraq. There is no reason to fight. Why do people have to suffer? Why do the children have to suffer? They are innocent. When I was young, I enjoyed Barney and the Big Comfy Couch. Why can't they enjoy life like me? They can't go to school; they have to work to get enough money for their families. They need a chance to live a kid's life. I don't think this is fair what is happening. There shouldn't be a war on Iraq. They are my brothers and sisters in humanity. I don't want harm to come to them. I'd be really sad if they have a war because many innocent people will be killed and tortured. If a child's mother was killed, who would be there for that child then? Imagine if that happened to you, how would you feel? What would you do? Where would you go? Think about it! I pray that the innocent Iraqi children don't suffer or have pain sorrow in their lives (*Ameen*).

Siram Tortumlu, age 10

Don't Attack Iraq
What did they do to you?
Don't Attack Iraq
This is so true
Don't Attack Iraq
Because if you do
There will be no more Iraq
And that is also true.

Abdu Raheem Waithe, age 11

Dear United Nations,
I am writing this letter to ask you people a couple of questions. Did you know that millions of people are getting hurt and killed everyday? We should all try to stop it. Many people are suffering. They are hurt and they don't have food, and that is very wrong. It is hurting the other people. Did you know that in another article in the Toronto Star, they had this little boy who had to make lead and metal chains and guess what; he was only 4 years old! He was working with his older brother who was 13. So, it is very sad .We should all try to stop it.

Fatima Faryaal Khan, age 10

Dear United Nations,
I really don't like what might happen to Iraq. Why are you allowing them to be attacked? They never did anything to you. They are suffering so much. I really don't understand why people fight.
Please, please with cherries & sprinkles on top, stop the war. I feel very extremely sorry for the people of Iraq because they are our brothers and sisters in humanity. We should care a lot for each other. Why is this happening to Iraq?
Say if you are 100% sure that you are going to attack them, maybe our letters will change your mind to 70% or even 90% , *Insha' Allah* (God Willing!)

Mariam Hasan

If all of this could just stop,
Everyone could share and care.
Then you and they could live, not die,
This world was made for you and I.
Maybe some lives could still be
If you'd just leave them free.

Zainab Elsayed, age 11

I have a few questions about the war in Iraq. I am wondering how all the children will survive the attack? How will they continue to survive without food?
I think America should not fight Iraq. It is not good. Lots of people will lose their lives and won't have food and shelter.
I really feel sorry for all the people in Iraq. I pray for them that *Allah* will help them when they fight and that people will not die *InshAllah* (God-Willing). *Allah* will make the war go away. *Ameen*.
The children are like my brothers and sisters. I don't want them to die. It makes me cry. It makes me really sad. Please tell America to stop the war, please.

Narmeen Elahi Malik

Dear United Nations.....
Why is there going to be a war? What about all the children? Why will you hurt Iraq? Don't you know it's not good to kill people? How would you feel if you were the people in Iraq!? Children are starving, children are crying, children cannot afford to even go to school. United Nations; how could you?!

Hasina Barrie, age 10

Dear Children of Iraq,
I understand you suffer day and night, making steel chains for a living. You don't know that in Canada, no one suffers. In Toronto, which is where I live, it is very good. There are cars and buses and police officers to protect you. I don't suffer one bit, *Alhamdulilah* (Thank God). One day I would want to see your country and see how you live. Sometimes I wonder," Hey! Why do people want to bomb your country?" Islam is a religion of peace; everyone should be able to express their ideas and hopefully stop wars. I don't understand why the U.S wants to attack your country. This totally doesn't make any sense. May *Allah* bless you and your families. *Ameen*.

Naima Abdirahman, age 10

War Is...
War is a poison,
Poison causes death,
War causes death.
War is problem,
The world doesn't need problems,
The world doesn't need war.
War is a fire,
Fire destroys,
War destroys,
War is not needed,
Because war is death.

Haaris Gilani, age 10

Dear United Nations,
I am writing this very important and sad letter to suggest to you to inform the United States of America not to fight.
The reason why I am telling you this is because the U.S.A. respects you and they will listen. Even if they do not agree, please try. They have no right to fight Iraq. Do you have any idea why they are going to attack?
They are just fighting for silly reasons. Even if they do not understand, I will make *duaa* so they do understand.
"Oh *Allah* Please help them understand that they shouldn't fight. (*Ameen*)"

Sumayyah Abdus-Samad, age 10

COHESION

Want to reach out to fellow Muslims? Want to organise fun and exciting events that you know will attracts lots of Muslim brothers and sister, who otherwise don't come out? Join Cohesion!

Cohesion is a huge project under the MSA Events Committee.

Every single day we come across Muslims who are not on the right path, are sidetracked, misled by the media, their other friends, society, fashion, and so much more. And they're around us. Some examples: Sister has an internal debate- she wants to quit smoking, but sees no point in it. Her parent's don't know. Such people fall into bad friendship…Brother who's shy, new, wants to make friends but doesn't even have the courage to talk to the person praying next to him…Sister who finds herself gradually diverting from Islam, falling into relationships, loses control of herself, and messes up her life. Who's going to be their guiding stone?

We need to open up ourselves to them. The reason why this is important is because at some point in time it's our responsibility to make them realize that we can be better friends to them, than the ones they have. So, what we have to do is a systematic, slow approach, to become a part of their lives, and build a strong friendship on strong foundations of Islam and trust.

Cohesion is about reaching out to brothers and sisters on campus. The aim is to build a very strong/wide network for communication, advice, counselling, socialising, etc. We need to make the 'dormant MSA members' active, and get them involved. MSA has something to offer to each and every single Muslim on campus, and also non-Muslims who just want to learn about Islam-and the idea is to get this message across to them. We need to increase the MSA workforce, to ensure that the foundations of the future MSA are always going to be strong and reliable. Every time it's time for postering, it's the same people, same people at the meetings…we have to change that.

So far, Cohesion has had several successes, *Alhamdulillah*!

1. On the day of *Eid-Al-Adha*, we gifted several pots filled with candies to our Muslim sisters in our classes as a first step towards getting to know them.
2. 'Sisterz Shopping Spree' on Boxing Day was a great success too, although, we didn't end up shopping…but it's the spirit that counts!
3. Along similar spirits, the 'Sisterz Formal and Talent Nite' on February 16, was a great success! Although the event was not a part of Cohesion, but it implemented many of it's objective.
4. The Cohesion-Buddy program, launched recently (under Pro-Fac) has received a good response, *Alhamdulillah*- but we still want you to join! Please contact Sr. Maheen: maheen_sayal@hotmail.com.
5. Academics are the reason why we're here, which is the reason why Faraz Nomani embarked on the Engineering Mentoring program on January 8. Interested? Contact: faraz_55@hotmail.com.
6. During Islam Awareness Week, February 3-7, Nuzhat Khursheed [nuzhatkh@hotmail.com] was in charge of the getting passport of first year students stamped. The Passport Program is an initiative to get new students involved with the University life. *Insha'Allah*, we'll be working on introducing our own MSA Passport program for first year students, because *Masha'Allah*, we have a plethora of events!
7. As part of expanding our footprints around campus, Sayam Masood keeps track of the ever-growing Cohesion database, which includes lists of Cohesion members, engineering mentors, Liaisons between MSA and other student groups, frosh events during the year, high school MSAs and MSA Events. If you have helpful information, email: sayammasood@hotmail.com
8. More recently, a Cohesion workshop on ' The Etiquettes of Reaching Out to Muslims on Campus', the first of it's kind, was held on March 14, with Dr. Yaser Haddara. This has been Cohesion's biggest achievement, Alhamdulillah- because it was a very productive workshop.

We have lots of ideas and plans for next year- new members always bring new ideas, so I really encourage you to join! And there's so much to be done, but all it needs is initiative.

Humairah Irfan
Head, Cohesion project
MSA Events Committee
humairah.irfan@utoronto.ca

Poetry Corner

In My Place

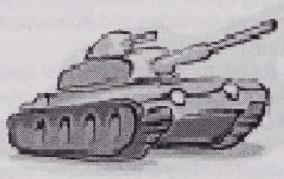
My mother grew old too quickly.
Each wrinkle on her distraught face
and hands was a tragedy.
Her worn fists use to knead the little dough we had
with the most passion I have ever seen.
Kneading to forget.
She smiled but her beautiful eyes were scarred
and full of pain.
My mother was brave
She lived through wars
She saw them dragging my father out
into the black night, shattering our lives with
one gunshot.
My mother was determined even though
she outlived many of her children. With her eyes
she saw the youngest ones die agonizing deaths.
She had no medicine to give them.
My mother was strong
she lived through the bloodshed and brutal execution
of her sons.
My mother was angry
for her husband, for her babies, and
for her life that was ripped to worthless shreds.
My mother was tired
of struggling through the difficulties and heartaches.
My mother died.
I cried at her simple funeral, asking God
why I had lived and my family had not.
I asked him why the mothers, forever kneading,
are paying for all the cruelty.
In my place, I kneel, humbled by all the lives
I couldn't change, couldn't save.
As the rain washes my mother away with the soil,
I cry because she suffered for us.
But I will save my daughter like my mother saved me.

Asmaa Hussein

My war

Living here today I only hear, hear what "they" told me
Who are they anyway?
All I know, All I believe, all I can feel is that it is bad
Sad in the lives of all of the victims, through my eyes a crime ignored
Fighting for freedom, for power for reason? Oh, but who would ever question!
Slaughtered, murdered, vanquished and gone, how quickly it happens and then forgotten,
Then round the circle again, another human eliminated
But is life not a game? A winner, a loser, sometimes and always, it's the same victim.
How unfortunate we say it is, how sad…
How sad that we sit here and watch. Guilty I feel to not have done more.
Helpless, embarrassed I know not how to stop it!
But on my life goes, the next day morning comes,
Worry about the party, the show, oh yes, I forgot about the war!
Click on the news; oh look its "them" the people who told me that "we" would always win.
5 hundred dead today and 100 on the floor. Wow what a big number, if only I knew how many more!
How did this happen, I keep on forgetting or is it "those people" who keep manipulating.
I am a victim, a sad case indeed. I've fallen in the trap of power, and it's so hard to escape.

Ayesha Jawaid, 1st yr student, Humanities & Social Sciences



AHAD!

"AHAD!"

Why shed these tears of sorrow?
Why shed these tears of grief?
Ya nafsy how soon you forget,
After trials come sweet relief

Why turn you from Ar-Rahman?
Why yearn for a listening friend?
Ya nafsy, do you not remember,
On ALLAH, you must depend?

Read you not those stories,
of the trials in days gone by,
Of the Sahabi beloved by Allah,
who for Allah's cause did strive?

Why loosen your hold upon him?
Why fling away, His outstretched Hand?
Ya nafsy, do you not remember,
Bilal's sabr on the blazing sand?

"Ahad! Ahad!" He cried,
While his flesh did drip and burn.
"Ahad! Ahad!" He cried,
To Allah alone he turned.

Forget you the firmness of Hamza,
As the gleaming swords did fall?
With Sabr he turned to Allah,
as the qureish did slice and maul.

Why drown in salty tear drops?
How can you dare compare your pain?
To that of Yasir and Summayah,
As they lay tortured on the scorching plain?

Forget you the charring of Khabbab,
As on burning coals he lay?
Ya nafsy how meager your suffering,
Wherefore do you lose your way?

Why befriend you not Al-Wali?
Why not in Salat to Him complain?
Like Job who only to Allah,
Turned in all his grief and pain?

Forget you that trials in this life,
cleanse your heart and make it clean?
Ya nafsy, why all this sadness?
do you not wish your heart to gleam?

Be patient in all your hardships,
Allah hears your cries of woe.
So trust Him and His hikma,
for He knows best and you don't know.

So tighten your hold upon him,
Lest He withdraw His outstretched Hand!
And remember the exmple of Bilal,
as he lay anchored on the blazing sand.

"Ahad! Ahad!" he cried,
While his flesh did drip and burn.
"Ahad! Ahad!" he cried,
To Allah alone he turned.

(Author Unknown)

EXISTENCE

Life without existence is void.
A meaningless existence creates trepidation within.
This leads to alienation of the soul from the body
Agony of the soul leads to an unrewarding final termination.
But,
Life with Islam makes existing meaningful.
Islamic existence wipes out all apprehension and anxiety.
This leads to the harmonious compatibility of the body and soul.
Enlightenment is experienced with the submission to the One Creator.
This submission is followed by an eternity of tranquility in the hereafter.
Therefore Islam is the only way to achieve completion.

Mohammad Chowdhury
1st year Electrical Engineering

Part 4 - Islamic Psychology of the Self:

By Nosheen Mian, University of Toronto (St. George), 3rd Year - Islamic Studies
From the lecture series by Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui

In somewhat of a conclusion to this series on the Islamic Psychology of the Self, we will now share some stories illustrating the character of Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* - the Messenger of God.

We have established over the three previous parts of this series, that external actions are the result of an internal state and that whatever the state of one's inner self is, then actions of that sort result effortlessly. What we will discuss here is perhaps something we have heard before, but as Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) says, "Reminders are helpful to those who have faith". Here it is Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* we are discussing and when he acted the way he acted, his actions emanated from an inner self that was very beautiful, as it was in a state of peace, stability, and serenity like a calm pond of water that detects any type of disturbance through ripples. This is a very sensitive state of the inner self.

We shall begin with Rasool Allah's characteristic of **SILENCE**. He always used the blessing of the tongue properly. He is reported to have had prolonged intervals of silence and when he spoke, he spoke gems, diamonds, and pearls - things beneficial to himself and his community in the quest of servitude to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). Therefore, if we are really serious about emulating his character in order to aid our quest to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), we must struggle to develop that characteristic of prolonged silence. We shall keep our tongue from speaking - how about we try to minimize the words we utter, not speaking when we desire to do so. Let us try that and see how challenging it is and keep it as a rule of practice *Insha'Allah* and we shall never regret it. Usually a person does not regret having kept quiet, but often regrets having spoken. That's why they say, "if speaking were to be of silver, then silence would be of gold".

Next we turn to Rasool Allah's characteristic of **LAUGHTER AS A SMILE**. His laughter was not a loud, shattering disturbance; rather, it was nothing more than a huge smile. Aisha *(radi'Allahu 'anha)* reports that even when he smiled such that you could see his back teeth, one never saw the back of his throat. So his laughter was not loud, yet some of us not only laugh loudly, but we talk loudly as well and this was not of his characteristics either. He was soft spoken but firm. And Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) says in Surah Luqman that those who speak loudly are like donkies braying, for Luqman tells his son to control/lower his voice because the worst of sounds is the braying of a donkey. Yet in the current culture of the world, the culture of lack of modesty, the more aggressive men and women we are, the more "civilized" we become, and the more we affirm ourselves. Modesty now, especially in women, is seen as subjugation and weakness. But remember our scholars have said that modesty is beautiful in every creature, although it is most beautiful in women. Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* said, "if you have no modesty/ shame, then you will do as you please!" meaning the expression "do what you like" is an expression of lack of modesty. Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* himself is described as having more intense, pronounced, and obvious **MODESTY** than an unmarried young lady in her private quarter. Remember now that the defining characteristic of Islam is modesty/shame and Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* said, "Faith and modesty have always been held together; if one of them is lifted, then the other is lifted." In other words these are indicators to gage the level of faith of ourselves and of our surroundings based on the level of modesty and vice-versa. The Arabic root meaning for 'life' and 'modesty' is the same and the word "to show modesty" is a homonym meaning "to resuscitate, give life, keep alive" and so the Qur'an and Islam are telling us that where there is no modesty there is no life because it is a life only of the three lower states of the self not of the angelic state. Thus without modesty we are living like cattle, predators, and devils (I seek refuge in Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)!). Yet modesty is one of those things that would disappear and would become a rare commodity, if you will, in the world of sins.

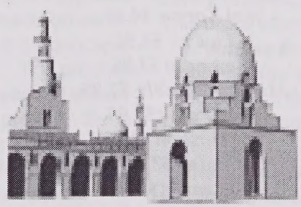
Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* was very gentle and soft, but also very stern when it came to the rights and commands of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) for he had a balanced self. As such, his great **COMPASSION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT** was a compassion that originated in the source of compassion, Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) Mighty and Majestic! Therefore what we learn from his character with the environment is much nobler than that of an environmentalist stripped from the notion of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). We, through the teachings of Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam),* see that every leaf is in remembrance of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), every bee, insect, stream of water, and breeze of wind is in remembrance of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). Thus, we revere Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) and consequently His creatures. This is especially so since the Qur'an teaches us that all of those creatures are communities like ourselves and that they are in remembrance of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). The mountains celebrate and communicate with each other in ways unknown to us and ask each other "did anyone pass by you today that was in the remembrance of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)?" and if one of them says yes they

The Balanced Nature of Rasool Allah ﷺ

all celebrate. That is why we are compassionate to the environment and are better than "environmentalists" who see it as another toy to enjoy without any greater purpose. Which one is more noble, profound, and "sophisticated"?! Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) is the Greatest! So Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* was gentle with all of Allah's creations: humans, animals, plants, everything! And he said, "Whosoever plants a plant, crop, or vegetation and of it some humans, animals, or birds eat or benefit, then it will be considered a charity for that person just as that which is stolen from it will also be considered a charity for that person."

Another characteristic of Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* was his **GENTLENESS**. He is reported to have said in an authentic *hadith*, "Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) is Gentle and He loves gentleness and rewards as the result of gentleness that which He does not reward as the result of violence nor as the result of anything else!" That is why his approach was always one of gentleness unless it became impossible and faith, life, or property were seriously endangered and there was no other way of remedying the situation. Yet some of us begin with the end and find it very easy to hastily say "I have done enough!" or "I have been gentle", but remember these statements depend on what level of the self we are at (cattle-like, predatory-like, satanic or angelic). So Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* was gentle. One day he was walking alongside his wife Aisha *(radi'Allahu 'anha)* (and yes, despite the fact that some Muslims in certain cultures don't like that, in 14th century "desert culture" the prophet *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* walked with his wife, with modesty of course which they both possessed), as they walked they came across some people of the tribes of the Non-Muslim People of the Book, who at the time had the habit of ridiculing Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* and being malicious in the words they used. So, instead of saying *Assalaamu'alaykum* (peace be upon you), they would say, *Assaamu'alaykum* meaning "death be upon you". Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* and the companions knew this and so he responded "*wa'alaykum*" (and upon you), but Aisha replied "and death be upon you, and the Anger and the Wrath of Allah!" because this was not only her husband, but Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)*. Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* in his ocean of peace said, "take it easy Aisha, be gentle and beware of violence because whenever gentleness is introduced to something it beautifies it and whenever violence is introduced to something it makes it ugly." Unfortunately today, many Muslims from various cultures including Arabs say the beautiful greeting given to us by Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) in such a way that it resembles the way the non-Muslims once said it as a mockery, though here the intention is good, but there is no heart/love in the greeting.

Of Rasool Allah's characteristics was also **FORGIVENESS**. Of the many examples that could be used to illustrate this point, only one will be chosen due to limited space. One day Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* was in his mosque (where by the way, one prayer is equal to 1000 prayers elsewhere); a Bedouin walked in picked a corner and



started to urinate. The companions saw him and jumped on him probably wanting to cause harm to him in some way, Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* saw this and said, "Leave him! Leave him! Do not interrupt him!" He waited for the man to finish and told the companions to take a few buckets of water and rinse the area. Then he spoke to the man gently telling him, "this *masjid* is not meant for such things, it is meant for remembering Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), praying, and the recitation of the Qur'an" - and not for shouting, backbiting and hitting each other either. Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* taught him so gently, kindly, and persuasively that the man made a supplication after that saying "Oh Allah give me mercy and Muhammad and no one else with us!" Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)* replied and taught him something else "Oh man, you have restricted someone very magnanimous" - i.e. it doesn't have to be just you and I, include others as well.

Look at where we are, and we talk about our failures? Why are we failing politically, economically, militarily, socially, and in *da'wa* - so many of us are angry *da'i's* as if *da'wa* is a curse on other people. Certain expressions of *da'wa* now are like a piece of hot iron on those who do not know any better. Where are we? And we ask why we are not the leaders of the civilized world? - What?! - *Alhamdulillah* that we are not at this time because this faith would be given the worst of impressions. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) gives leadership to those who deserve it, often times we don't question ourselves, we question the other, saying as individuals and societies "I'm so innocent, I don't deserve anything."

My dear brothers and sister these are some breezes from the beautiful wings of the beautiful character of Rasool Allah *(sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam)*. They originate in an inner self that is in a state of serenity and in order that we conduct ourselves in such a manner or something remotely close to it, we must embark a long time ago and not only tomorrow on the purification of the self. I ask Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) to infuse in your hearts and mine the desire to do that, and to learn genuinely, sincerely, and seriously, how to do that. And then we shall attain happiness in this world and *Insha'Allah* give it to others, as well as happiness in the next world and *Insha'Allah* Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) grant us all a cure so that we can give that happiness to others on the Day of Judgment.

"They ask thee what is lawful to them (as food). Say: lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure: and what ye have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by Allah. eat what they catch for you, but pronounce the name of Allah over it: and fear Allah. for Allah is swift in taking account." [Quran 5:4]

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"And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and be not divided amongst yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favour on you; so that by His Grace, ye became brethren...Thus doth God make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided." [Quran 3:103]

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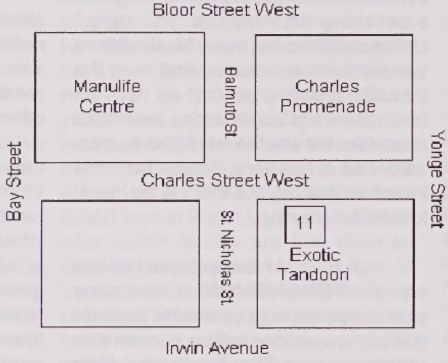

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$5.99
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The Prophets of Islam

Prophet Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* was chosen by Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* as a messenger for the people of Ad (an area between contemporary Oman and Yemen). The people of Ad were strong and renowned for their craftsmanship, particularly in the construction of tall buildings and towers. Their incredible power and wealth led them to be an arrogant people and unjust rulers. They worshipped others along with Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*, and so He decided send them guidance through prophet Hud *('alayhi assalaam)*.

Prophet Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* condemned his people's idol worship and considered it an insult to the intellect to worship stones made out of their own hands. Only one deity should be worshipped and that was Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. He reminded them that it was God who had endowed them with such incredible strength and skill, and thus they should be grateful to Him and Him alone. He threatened them with a similar fate that destroyed the disbelievers amongst prophet Noah's people if they, too, chose to disbelieve.

But Hud's people refused the message from Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* that the prophet brought with him. Instead they asked him if his motives were to become their leader or what payment he was asking of them. The prophet tried to make them understand that his reward would be from Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* and he had no other motives than to deliver Allah's message. He only hoped that they would open their hearts to the light of truth. He wanted them to see the infinite bounties Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* showered upon the people of Ad: strength, power, & even rain to revive the soil in their dry land.

The proud people of Ad argued with the prophet and remarked: "O Hud! Do you say that after we die and turn into dust, we will be resurrected?" The prophet informed them that indeed they would be resurrected on the Day of Judgment and they would be held accountable for their deeds on earth. But they only laughed in ignorance, bewildered at the concepts of 'returning to life' and 'the Day of Judgment'. The prophet explained that it was necessary because good was not always triumphant in life and sometimes evil would prevail. Such crimes would never go unpunished under the just hands of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. A day to account for one's good and bad deeds revealed the extent of Allah's justice.

The people of Ad also felt it strange that Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* would choose them to reveal his message to. But, once again, prophet Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* patiently explained that Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* was trying to guide them to the right way of life and He chose Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* to warn them. If they chose to disbelieve, they would be met by a fate similar to one that befell prophet Noah's people. Their response was that their gods would save them. Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* further tried to explain that the fundamental reason for their destruction would be these gods that they claimed would save them. However, the conflict only grew deeper and the people of Ad became more proud, obstinate, tyrannical, and defiant. In fact, they accused the prophet of becoming insane as a result of insulting their gods.

Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* realized that he could do no more but to turn to Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. He realized that punishment would be incurred by the disbelievers and affirmed his dependence on his Creator, Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*:

"I call Allah (subhana wa ta'ala) to witness and bear you witness that I am free from that which you ascribe as partners in worship with Him. So plot against me, all of you and give me no respite. I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature but He has grasp of its forelock. Verily, my Lord is on the Straight Path (the truth). So if you turn away, still I have conveyed the message with which I was sent to you. My Lord will make another people succeed you, and you will not harm Him."

[Quran, 11:54-57]

Hud's people waited for Allah's punishment, and it soon came. A drought spread throughout the land and rain ceased to fall. Seeing the scorched desert sands, the people of Ad asked Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* what the drought was. The prophet replied that Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* was angry with them and that if they believed then Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* would accept them and shower their land with rain and increase their strength. But the people of Ad only became more obstinate in their disbelief. The land became drier and vegetation died.

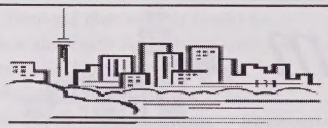
A day arrived when the sky became full of clouds and the people of Ad rejoiced at the prospect of rain. But the weather drastically changed from scorching hot to stinging cold with a fierce wind. The wind and cold grew as the days and nights passed. Hud's people began to flee to their tents, but their tents soon were ripped from their stakes. The incredible wind barely touched something before it was destroyed or killed. This brutal storm raged for eight days and seven nights.

"And as for Ad,-they were destroyed by a furious violent wind which Allah (subhana wa ta'ala) imposed on them...that you could see men lying overthrown (destroyed) as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees!"

[Quran, 69:6-7]

The only ones to survive the storm were prophet Hud *('alayhi assalaam)* and his followers. They remained unharmed because of their belief in one god: Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. They guarded themselves against the pride, obstinacy, tyranny, and defiance that the disbelievers suffered from. And on the Day of Judgment, they will be recognized for their courage and belief, as each and every one of us living today will be. Whether or not we will be amongst those in the shade of Allah's mercy on the Day or suffer a fate similar to the one the disbelievers of Ad succumbed to is up to us. We must never lose sight of the fact that we will stand in front of our Lord one day and be held accountable for our deeds. It is important that we always remember this and never go near to the ways of the people of Ad, unless we desire a similar fate.

Zahra Malik, 3rd year Health and Disease
University of Toronto, St.George



Opinions and Analysis

Representation of Islam

The city of Toronto is definitely well known for its multiculturalism and its acceptance of various religions. And thankfully the University of Toronto is no different. Living in a big city and studying at a big university such as U of T is a unique experience for everyone, especially for those of us who come from a smaller city or town. Being a Muslim, I was especially impressed and happy to find such a large and active Muslim Students' Association at the university. From personal experience, I feel that it is much harder to maintain your religion to the fullest when you live in a small town where it is a minority and is not represented strongly. One of the reasons for me to attend U of T was to gain more touch with Islam since there is a large population of Muslim students here.

Islam is by far the most powerful and realistic religion. It may seem very demanding or strict to those who are not Muslim and for those only look at the restrictions of Islam. All of the restrictions are only beneficial to us and not even science or modern society can prove that wrong. For example, we are prohibited from drinking, doing drugs; women are required to wear a hijab - just to name a few. Can you honestly find a negative side to being prohibited to any of these?

In my opinion, Islam is full of freedom. It is such a powerful religion that once you start to understand all of its aspects, you can never feel good about going against any of them. To me, Islam is freedom and faith. Because if you follow it, you feel good about yourself and your heart feels free. If you always try to prevent yourself from all the things that are forbidden and if you love and respect Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) – you are guaranteed to feel more free than any other person who doesn't obey these restrictions and never thinks about the consequences.

It is a shame that even after knowing all of these aspects of Islam, there still remain many non-active Muslim brothers and sisters. For those of you who are not all that religious and want to gain more touch with Islam - please start making that transition today. Our lives are very short and it is never too early or too late to start serving Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) as best as you can. You can start by talking to someone who is an active Muslim and getting involved in Islamic activities (i.e., joining the MSA). It may seem difficult to let go of all your daily activities or habits that are not approved in Islam, but it is possible. From personal experience, I can honestly say that the best way to start is by praying. I can guarantee you that your intensions will become better once you start to pray. Please do not hesitate to seek for help to other Muslims.

And for those of you, who are active Muslims, please be open minded to those who aren't. We should be grateful that they are Muslims and it is our duty to help them understand and follow Islam more. As someone who has been making that transition of being more religious, I can honestly say that it is very intimidating at times to approach someone who is a very active Muslim. It may be difficult for some people to understand why one would not follow Islam as much as they do, but it just happens. Therefore, please try to be very welcoming to those who are trying to change and start by pointing out the things they need to work on. It is very unfortunate, but many Muslims don't know what exactly they are doing wrong or how to go about correcting their mistakes. So, please show them some guidance and inspire them to follow it to the best of your abilities.

So, if you are a Muslim who has somehow drifted away from Islam or know of someone who has, please try to acknowledge them of all the beautiful things and freedom that Islam has to offer. I have discovered that when you feel that freedom – you become less and less afraid of death and feel more comfortable about your after life. I think the only way to lessen your fear and come into acceptance of death and the after life is to follow Islam to the fullest and serve Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) the best that you can. As my late grandfather has always told me, "Life is full of lies, but nothing is truer than death".

The point to all of this is that we are very lucky to live in a North American society and still be able to follow and represent our religion to the fullest despite of all the recent events that have taken place in the world. Most Muslim people in Canada are from different countries and have been given the opportunity for a better life. So, in the process of a better lifestyle, let's not forget to consider our religion, which is the most powerful component in one's life. A good life consists of respect, wealth, happiness and freedom. Many people may spend their entire lives having all of these and not following Islam. But what good is that kind of life? If you try to serve Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) to the best of your abilities, only then you can say that you have lived a good life. And you will see that all the other components of life will Insha'Allah find their ways to you.

After living in Toronto for only six months, I personally feel freer from the heart than I ever did before. I want to say a huge thanks to all of my Muslim brothers and sisters who inspire me everyday to be a good Muslim. It is you guys that inspire me to try to follow Islam to the fullest and to try to serve Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) in the best ways that I can. For those of you who are not active Muslims - please take a moment to think of all the internal peace and freedom that you are lacking. Because at the end of the day, what really counts is how many good things you have done to serve and please Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) and not how many bad things you have done to have fun!

Tahmina Afroz
1st Year Chemical Engineering

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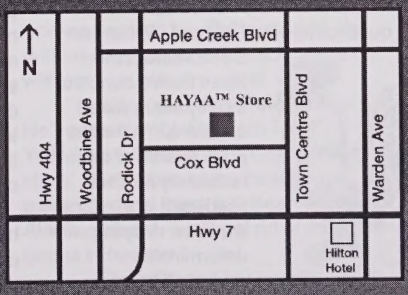

Hayaa

Translation: **modesty**
Pronunciation: **'haiy'yaa;**
Etymology: **Arabic**
1: **freedom from conceit or vanity;**
2: **propriety in dress, speech, or conduct.**

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The Adventures of Three Nervous Frosh

Adventure #4- The Final Fiasco

"Well my brothers in Islam, our first year of University is nearly complete, and we must now thank our hard working brothers and sisters in the MSA for all their efforts in making our first year a success! This wonderful year would not have been possible had it not been for all our daily after lecture study dua's (prayers), the mercy of the divine creator of heavens and the earth in answering them, and of course all those mentors in the new Buddy-Cohesion program who saved the day by helping us out with essays, assignments, labs and old tests!" happily declared Nakiwalla as his face gleamed with a bright smile. The three Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) conscience friends were up to their usual good-natured antics while seated in the brisk spring breeze in front of Sydney Smith Hall.

"Oh Nakiwalla, my faithful brother in Islam, I whole heartily agree, but we need to thank the MSA from the bottom of our hearts, and we need something that attract all the Muslims on campus, so they can show their gratitude as well! What we need is something, as they say "hip" and happening!" exclaimed Allahwalla who was deliriously lost in thought.

"Why do you say that my brother in Islam?" asked Nakiwalla curiously.

"Because my brother, if you add a few more letters to MSA..... it spells **MaSalA**, which means we need something truly lively and makes your taste buds simmer with delight, just like when eating my dear mother's yummy samosas!" exclaimed Allahwalla!

"You are correct! We need something that will draw the crowds out, and create some excitement! We need to organize a blessed week of festive events! We need a..... beard growing contest! It will bring out a wholesome sense of competition among the brothers to strive towards righteousness!" Added Nakiwalla with a gleeful smile (who had been combing trimming his beard daintily of late).

"Ah, but then the sisters may feel left out. We should tell them they can have a hijab fashion show at a separate venue," Allahwalla added thoughtfully.

"How about if we made everyone a home cooked meal with our very own hands?" peeped the shy Giddawalla, who was slowly emerging from his cocoon of shyness.

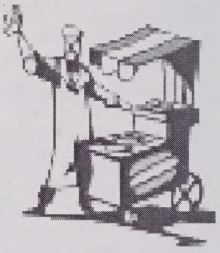
"That's an excellent Idea!" exclaimed Nakiwalla. "Our only challenge is determine how to prepare such a feast, for none of us has ever cooked before!" he went on to point out. But before Nakiwalla could say anything further, a typical, sidestepping, baggy pant wearing cool-guy passed by. His purple jeans dangled from his hips as his extra large imitation Vince Carter Jersey swayed along his knees, and his chest was cloaked with locks of extravagant, 99 cent gold chains.

"Um, um UMMMMM" he roared on his borrowed cell phone. "Last Saturday night at the pub's Rasta Roti night I wuz hangen wit sum fllllllllllllyyyyyyy baby-fly-a-high, chicks, owhhhh!" he howled.

Upon overhearing this conversation, Nakiwalla's face lit up. "Did you hear that my brothers in Islam, this purple man knows of flying chickens on campus! We can slaughter these chickens for halal food and make a wonderful feast for our brothers and sisters! What can be more from the heart than a bunch of freshly slaughtered chickens! We must go in search of them!" resolutely finished Nakiwalla who's face was now dripping with determination.

"But how shall we find these chickens my brother in Islam, the purple man has just gotten into his car and driven away" asked Allahwalla.

"The answer to that is as simple as reciting all of surah Bakara of the Holy Qur'an (chapter 2-The Cow) in one rakat of salat! All we have to do is ask this vendor where we can find these flying chickens" confidently replied Nakiwalla referring to a hot dog vendor near by. "Excuse me Mr. Sir, we are looking for the chickens of this campus, would you happen to know where we may find them?" asked Nakiwalla rather excitedly.



The hot dog vendor, who had still not forgiven the U of T admissions for not getting him into Trinity College, sarcastically replied "Trinity College! That's where all the chickens live."

"Subhanallah! Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) the merciful has truly guided us! To Trinity College!" declared Nakiwalla as the three sprinted towards Trinity.

Trinity's gothic archway summoned the trio into its cryptic maze of stained glass windows and dusky stone walls. The three huddled together in fright as they passed through its dimly lit hallways until coming upon four Trinity students. Dressed in their raven black Trinity robes, Harry Rosen Khakis, and matching Rolex watches, the three students were discussing which direction they should gel their hair in for today's polo match. Clearing his thoughts, Nakiwalla interrupted the conversation.

"Uh excuse me my brothers in humanity, but we are in search of the chickens of this campus and were directed here, do you happen to know where we may find them?" asked

Nakiwalla in a cheerful tone. Three stormy scowls swept over the Trinity students' faces like a violent tide bursting over a calm shore.

"Oh no Nakiwalla" began Allahwalla misunderstanding the Trinity student's display of anger. "This poor brother has not been able to understand you through your Desi accent and has become confused. You should make it easier for him to understand you" wisely advised Allahwalla.

"That's an excellent idea my brother in Islam! Brightly replied Nakiwalla. "C-H-I-C-K-E-N" sluggishly mouthed Nakiwalla, "you know, the feathered things that go BOK BOK BOK!" he said as he imitated a set of flapping wings with his arms. By now the Trinity students' ears were venting steam and their faces were boiling over with fury!

"YOU TRYING TO CALL US CHICKENS YOU DRESS WEARING MONKS!" exploded one of the students referring to the trio's long thobes.

"Oh, no, no, no my brother, I was just wondering…" before Nakiwalla could finish

"JUST WONDERING IF YOU COULD PICK A FIGHT EH! WELL, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO BLAST YOUR BUTTS BACK TO TIMBUKTU!!!!!!!! LET'S GET'EM GUYS!" Roared the Trinity student as he as his friends dashed towards Allahwalla, Nakiwalla, and Giddawalla!

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" they squealed in unison as trio jetted towards to nearest doorway. With their Kufi's flying off their heads and the trinity students hot on their trail, the trio leapt over the graying stone fence, (cautiously jerking away from any tiny ant mounds) as they ran like the wind towards St.George.

"Oh Nakiwalla, what shall we do, I do not understand how we were misunderstood!" huffed the tiring Allahwalla, who was fast running out of breath.

"Do not fear my brother's in Islam, just think of a true muminoon (believer) in times of tribulation to inspire you with strength" panted Nakiwalla. At that, the tiny Giddawalla suddenly thought of Lady Hagar in the blazing hot desert of the Najd, all alone with the tiny prophet Ismail (p.b.u.h) where Allah the merciful provided them with the Zam Zam well.

"ZAM ZAM, ZAM ZAM" stammered Giddawalla in a frenzy "ZAM-OPPS! He squealed as he smashed right into a fire hydrant causing it to erupt into a tidal wave of bursting water! A solid stream of frigid water spewed all over the Trinity students, drenching their costly attire and holding them back from advancing after the trio. "Opps…" whispered the innocent Giddawalla as he bit his nail in concern.

"Like hey, I remember you guys! You're the froshies who were in search of hall food right?" Exclaimed Alecia Silverpebble, the kind, but slow witted frosh leader who had first introduced the trio to the brave new campus at U of T in their first adventure and who just

happened to be out for a stroll with her poodle, Todo. Like mistaking every glass door for her own personal mirror, Alecia had also mistaken the Trio's search for "halal food" their first day on campus for hall food.

"Oh Miss. Pebbles, sorry we can't stay and chat, but those three fellows will have our hides if we don't leave quickly!" Gasped Allahwalla as he and his friends shielded the side of his face from Alecia, as he did with all women passing by. But suddenly, the unthinkable happened! Alecia came up with an……..with an…idea!

"Like never fear, Toto is here! He'll protect you! Sick 'em Toto!" Yelled Alecia with a shrill high-pitched chirp. "He's been to the best doggie training school there is!" Beamed Alecia proudly. "He'll get rid of those goons in no time."

She released her poodle, which, at her command, began terrorizing the Trinity students where it hurt them the most…leaping and chewing away at their genuine leather, Garth Brooks signature wallets!

"OHH, EH, SHOO!" screeched the Trinity students as they flimsily tried to ward off the savage poodle. "

Allah has granted us this opportunity to escape!" yelled Nakiwalla as the three jetted away from Trinity. Suddenly, a tandoori red van bulleted on to the scene! But this wasn't just any tandoori red van; it was the PSA's tandoori red van!

"JUMMMMMMPPPPP" yelped Nakiwalla as the trio lunged towards the back doors of the Psychology Student's Association's van, and hung on to the doors back handles with all their might! The same red van was used to kidnap the tiny Giddawalla for an experiment on kidnapping victims during trio's second adventure. Supporting themselves on the accelerating van's back bumper, the van speed down St.George Street, but the Trinity students were far from giving up as they sloshed into their pasty white Ford Bronco, and pursued the Trio.

The Bronco in hot pursuit, while the trio clung on to the back of the van for their dear lives! But the devious Trinity students weren't just satisfied with catching up! They were about to unleash their secret weapon!

"Agh! I'm blind!" squealed the tiny Giddawalla in angst, as he attempted to scoop out a glob of gray pupon from his eye!

"HAAAAAAAA! Take that sissy!" yelled one of the trinity students with a treacherous laugh as he prepared another round of flying pupon. He had became so excited he had to use his asthma inhaler to calm himself down! Nakiwalla turned back to see if these students were really engaging in the unholy act of throwing food, but was quickly blasted with a nose full of high-grade caviar. "Astaghfirullah! Think of all the children these fish eggs could feed!" helplessly beseeched Nakiwalla in an attempt to convince the Trinity student to stop throwing food.

continued on next page...

Just then, the tandoori red van took a sharp turn around Convocation Hall!

"AHHHHHHHHHH" yelled the trio as they lost their grasp of the backdoor handles, and were violently thrown onto the jagged pavement! But the ill-intentioned Trinity foursome was far from completing their mission! The pasty white Bronco roared onto the scene, and purposely headed straight for the trio! Jamming the gas peddle, the Bronco was about to steamroll

over the trio when… like a bird,…. like a plane,….or like a bunch of punk high school kids on their wicked skateboards, the trio's three mentoree's from their third adventure in Central Tech High School flew onto the scene! Faster than a bolt of lightening, the three high school kids heroically bulleted in front of the speeding bronco, just inches away from its gold plated license plate, which read "daddy's boyz", and yanked the trio out of harms way! Bringing the trio to the engineering building for cover, the trio graciously thanked the previously troubled teens.

"What are you doing here my brothers in humanity?" asked a disoriented Nakiwalla.

"We're here for a tour old homey! Saving the lives of our mascots, the maniacal mice, taught us that if you help people out, you get this wicked good feeling inside, and you also get an even wickeder payoff! That's why instead busting people's caps, and stealing lunch money, we've decided on something make something more out of our lives! We've decided to become criminal lawyers and defend our gangsta buddies! Finished an enthused red haired Central tech student!

"That's wonderful to hear my brother in humanity! May you be blessed with the greatest of success!" happily finished Nakiwalla in an encouraging tone.

As the high school students speed back onto their tour, a pact of 50 engineering students poured out of the Stanford Fleming library after a fun filled day immersed in the intellectual challenges of writing computer programs, solving problems, and yes, making perfectly folded paper airplanes that can cling rigidly to the library ceiling!

The trio was about to enter Stanford Fleming engineering building when the drenched, and poodle-trodden Trinity students bulleted by at 80km/hr! The speeding Ford bronco created a strong breeze that blew off one of the engineering student's snappy UofT engineering hats that gracefully landed on the tiny Giddawallah's head.

"Take this suckaaaaaaaaaaaaa," yelled one of Trinity students who stuck his head out of the Bronco's window and pulled out a gun! But not just any gun, a paint ball-launcher! Suddenly, the Trinity students hurled dozens of red paint balls right at the startled group of engineers, including Allawalla, Nakiwalla, and Giddawalla!

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH" the trio squealed in unison, but just as the tiny Giddawallah was about to be hammered by a blazing paintball, Nakiwalla heroically dove into the jaws of danger!

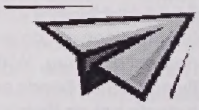
"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO" yelled Nakiwalla as he jumped in front of Giddawalla, shielding him from the speedy paint ball, falling victim to its pounding force instead.

"AHHHHHHHHHHH" he shrieked in pain, as Nakiwalla's body collided with the cold hard pavement. The engineering students looked on in shock! After all that commotion, the disoriented Nakiwalla confused the red paint for blood.

"Ohhh Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), all I wanted were some flying chickens! Oh most Merciful, please forgive me for all my sins, especially for complaining about my dear mother's chutney! I was such a terrible son!" cried Nakiwalla as he atoned for all his sins thinking these were his last moments. "Ashadu-lai-laha-ill-lal-la" began Nakiwalla raising his right index finger.

"No Nakiwalla! You have to keep fighting! You are not going to die! Think of all you still have to accomplish!" squealed Allahwalla who had rushed over to Nakiwalla's shivering body. "Think of all the good deeds we must still perform, think of all Quranic bingo games we still must play!" cried Allahwalla as he desperately tried to inspire Nakiwalla with some strength to carry on. The furious Trinity students were not even close to being done with the trio, as the aggressively spun around in a dangerous U-turn they were about to douse the trio with another round of fierce paint balls when…

"Hey, who do you think you're messing with?" yelled an enraged engineer. Glancing at the tiny Giddawalla with a snappy UofT engineering hat, the engineering student had mistaken Giddawalla for one of their own (the trio are not engineers). "YOU MESS WITH ONE OF US" the engineering student began in a menacing tone "YOU MESS WITH ALL OF US! PLANES UP!!!!!!" he yelled as the engineers gathered around both sides of the Bronco. Just as ordered, every one of the 30 engineering students pulled out a perfectly pleated, razor sharp paper airplane. "READY, AIM, FIRE!" With that, 30 razor sharp airplanes came raining down on the four Trinity students before they were able to launch another round of paint balls.



"Eeeeeeeehhhhhhhhhhhhhhh" they bawled as the aerodynamically perfect planes pierced the Trinity student's tender flesh and clung to their faces and arms like an army of angry darts. With their vision obstructed, and their hands paralyzed, the Trinity students lost control of their pasty white Ford Bronco a spun out of control at 80km/hr! "AHHHHHHHHHH" they screeched as their frantic cries of panic rang through the streets. Just as the riotous white Bronco was about to crash into a crowd of innocent

onlookers, the engineering students stepped into action!

All the graduating engineers had just received their 'Iron rings', symbols of completion of their laborious programs of study, and the rest of the undergrads had received their 'engineer in training' rings. Only this year, the rings had been redesigned as solar powered lasers capable of inflicting a mighty slice. "Aim...Strike!" commanded their leader, the engineer with the snappy purple hat! They pointed rings at the Bronco's tires and melted them like butter.

As the screeching bronco suddenly lost its momentum, and came to an abrupt halt. The Trinity students began crying for their mommy's, as they nursed their pricked skin. "I'm alive, I'm alive!" cheered Nakiwalla who suddenly realized he wasn't dying. "This is truly a miracle from Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)." Just as the commotion began to subside, the unthinkable happened-again! They were approached by...by a.... Muslim girl!!!!!!! "Oh no" sighed the tired Nakiwalla as he and his friends lowered their gazes.

"Asalamu alaikum are you guys alright," asked the concerned sister.

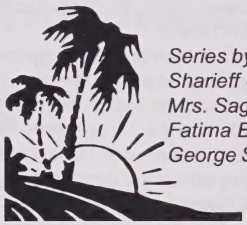
"Yes sister we are fine, but unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in finding the flying chickens of this campus." Sighed the disappointed Nakiwallah. After a half an hour of explaining to the trio that they were mislead about the flying chickens, the trio accepted their mistake.

"I hope you guys realize not all Trinity students are like those guys, I go to Trinity too" said the sister in as reassuring voice.

"That is good to know," said Nakiwallah as he let out a sigh. "For if this was our first year on this St. George Campus, who knows what the rest of our stay at UofT will be like" finished Nakiwallah with an exhaustive sigh.

"Uh, yes, I agree with the group! Happily added the tiny Giddawalla, much louder than usual. And with that, the three Allah-conscience friends lived Islamically ever after.

THE END



Series by: Ayesha Sharieff U of T @ Mrs. Saga & Fatima Butt @ St. George Subs

(continued from page 7...)

and education... I started looking at the divorce, property, and inheritance laws. They were quite breathtaking! I realised very quickly that Islam launched the women's liberation movement more than 1,400 years ago... The more I read, the more I wanted to know."

Ridley's views against international aggression and injustice are quite strong: "Far from being a nation-builder, America has left [Afghanistan] in chaos. The war is still raging. Hamid Karzai is now known as the mayor of Kabul because he has completely lost control of his country outside the capital. There are seven million people displaced and disposed. The Taliban are regrouping in the southern areas. Eighty percent of the warlords have indicated that they too will support the Taliban. Far from the war being over, it is just starting... Canada is being asked to commit some of its soldiers. If they are remaining in the capital under peacekeeping circumstances, they will be targeted. If they end up doing the Americans' dirty work, they will expose themselves to allegations of war crimes, because there are some really shocking things going on."

Yvonne Ridley's lecture was well received by the audience, which consisted of both Muslim and non-Muslim students and families. The question-and-answer period that followed was just as interesting as her talk. For example, she made a clear distinction between the ideologies of the Taliban regime and the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. Many times throughout her speech, she alluded to the difference between mainstream Islam and the laws that the Taliban had been implementing within their society.

In terms of dealing with Islamophobia in the media, Ridley's advice is that "if you read something offensive, don't sit around talking about it... write letters and get your friends to send letters." She also encouraged positive feedback if you read something you enjoy.

Yvonne Ridley used the "Liberation of Kabul" as an example to criticise current media practices: Afghans were paid off by Western journalists to throw flowers, shave their beards, and burn their *burqa*s, simply to make nice images for television and newspapers.

However, she clearly dispelled rumours that she had already become Muslim. "I have yet to take my Shahadah... I feel as though it's coming very close now and I would like it to be a private affair," Ridley explained.

Many things have drawn her closer to Islam, the most inspiring of which have been Muslim sisters. "I love them. I think that they are absolutely amazing!" Ridley exclaimed. "Before September 11th, I probably would have looked at many of you and seen the *hijab* and thought, 'O poor, suppressed, subjugated women.' Now, I know differently," she continued. "I have never met such a bunch of opinionated, politicised, wonderful, intelligent women — a real inspiration. The sisterhood and their brand of support and help just make Western feminism pale in significance. I will never, ever again judge a woman's freedoms, liberties, and intelligence by the length of her skirt!" Ridley concluded, to a loud round of applause.

Yvonne Ridley enjoyed her stay in Toronto and hopes to return soon. She has detailed her life-changing experience in her first book, entitled In the Hands of the Taliban. When asked about her plans, she said that she hopes to concentrate her efforts on humanitarian reporting without falling for government propaganda. She has been back to Afghanistan twice and is planning trips to other parts of the Muslim world.

Video and audio recordings of Yvonne Ridley's lecture can be purchased from the MSA. For more information, please visit http://www.utoronto.ca/muslim/swj/

excerpts from ***The Ambition****, March 2003 http://www.theambition.com/*

Do they make you WEAR TIGHTS?

Next time you walk past the 'Hair Place' in Hart House, look across the corridor at a picture – that of one of the earlier U of T Males Gymnastics Team. You might then understand that a question like the one from my Muslim brothers on campus is justified.

For those who have not yet heard, I have taken a gymnastics course at the AC. And, dear brothers, thank God I can wear what I want!

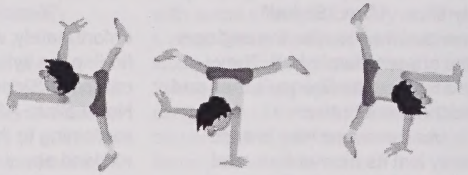
Some of my friends confuse gymnastics with aerobics. That's why I get embarrassing remarks. I agree that there are a lot of females in gymnastics, but come on, nearly half the gymnastics tutors at the AC are men!

You see, this semester, I took a light course load. Some physical activity should be good for keeping me busy *and* in shape, I said to myself.Gymnastics is one of the best exercises for the heart and it helps keep good shape and form. Gymnasts develop the muscles in 2 ways: specific strength exercises taught in gymnastics help strengthen muscles; flexibility enhances blood flow to muscle groups and it also improves the cardiovascular system.

One drawback doing gymnastics in the U of T could be the amount of arrows that Shaytaan carries around that place! (Remember those leaflets?) One has got to keep his gaze protected (as brother Nakiwalla would)

Just before 7 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I am sitting with the brothers in the ISC and the discussion proceeds thus:

Musheer bhai sahib: *So, you done for the day, Faraz?*
Me: *No, I have this class now…*
Everyone: *WHAT, Now?*
Me: *Well, yeah, you see, it is a sports class I have started this semester (oh God, don't let them ask "what sport?")*
Brother Nakiwalla: *What sport?*
Me: *It's…err…gymnastics*
Everyone: *HAHAHAHA!!* (Me starting to blush!)
Mr. Salman: *Do they make you wear tights?*
Everyone: *HAHAHAHA!!...*



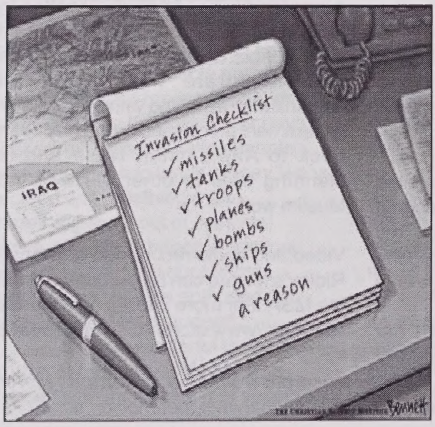
…And so it goes, every week with a different group!

As for the sisters, I have been very careful what I discuss with *them*! But you know what, I can't wait to learn some really cool moves, and then maybe you will see me go somersaulting across ISC prayer room area – that might change people's attitude.

As a moral of the story, my brothers in Islam, next time you want to try something different, I suggest you find out what the general impressions of the MSA people on campus are– you could even educate them!

[Faraz is a 2nd year Life Sciences student at the U of T St. George Campus. He is planning to initiate a very basic beginner's gymnastics class for the MSA brothers next year. This is not going to be a formal course, only a friendly once-a-week class. Anyone interested contact him at farazars@yahoo.com

JOKEZ



Two men were on a plane on a business trip when a Muslim couple boarded the plane and were seated right in front of them. The two men, eager to have some fun, started talking loudly.

"My boss is sending me to Saudi Arabia", the one said, "But I don't want to go...too many Muslims there!"

The Muslim couple noticeably heard and grew uncomfortable.

The other guy laughed, "Oh, yeah, my boss wanted to send me to Pakistan but I refused...WAY too many Muslims!"

Smiling, the first man said, "One time I was in Iran but I HATED the fact that there were so many Muslims!"

The couple fidgeted.

The other guy responded, "Oh, yeah...you can't go ANYWHERE to get away from them...the last time I was in FRANCE I ran into a bunch of them too!"

The Muslim couple glanced over their shoulders, noticeably irritated.

The first guy was laughing hysterically as he added, "That is why you'll never see me in Indonesia...WAY too many Muslims!"

At this, the Muslim man turned around. "Why don't you go to Hell?", he asked, "I hear there's not very many Muslims THERE!"

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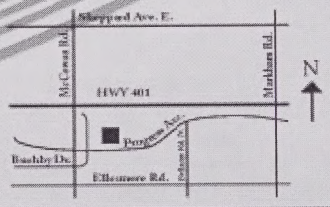

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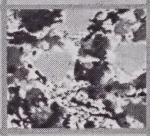

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